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POLITICAL - EXTERNAL

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1. Soviet Space Flights

Events abroad and even the voluminous reports regarding the progress of the Soviet harvest faded into the background during the past week with the launching of the Soviet space ships Vostok III on August 11 and Vostok IV the next day, respectively piloted by Major Andrian NIKOLAYEV and Colonel Pavel POPOVICH. The two space ships, which were set on orbits close to each other, landed simultaneously on August 15 south of the city of Karaganda in Kazakhstan. Nikolayev orbited the earth 64 times and Popovich more than 48 times.

The stated purposes of the "group flight" were: (1) to obtain data on the effects of space flight conditions on the human body; (2) to study man's work capacity under weightless conditions; (3) to carry out scientific observations under flight conditions; (4) to improve space systems, means of communication, control and landing; (5) to obtain experimental data on the possibility of establishing contacts between two ships; and (6) to coordinate the actions of the astronauts. Although no timetable was given regarding future space flights, it was clear that this achievement is directed toward a future landing on the moon. One Soviet scientist, Y. FYODOROV, indicated that the joint operation provided information on maneuvering, changing orbits, and assembling installations in outer space. Rocket specialist, BLAGONAVOV, noted that the time is not far off when automatic stations will study, first without the presence of man, physical conditions on the surface of the moon, then the atmosphere and surface of the planets of the solar system.

Coverage of the space flights took up virtually entire issues of newspapers and included l. e telecasts from the capsules of the space ships. The wide publicity given to the backgrounds of the two pilots and the extensive nature of the coverage indicated that the Soviets were extremely well prepared for this event. There seems to be no doubt that the Soviets were trying to counteract the wide impact which had been achieved by the United States through the open coverage given to the flights of US astronauts. The Soviet achievements were depicted as a great victory for the Socialist system and proof that the USSR had achieved a marked superiority over the US in space and rocket engineering. As heretofore, the primary propagandist theme was that the Soviets were exploring space purely for peaceful purposes in contrast to the US whose space program was directed primarily to military ends. Numerous Soviet commentaries belittled US space achievements and claimed that the flights of Nikolayev and Popovich had cast a sense of gloom among American leaders and military figures. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

2. North Korea

On August 15, the North Koreans held a reception in Moscow to mark the 17th anniversary of Korea's "liberation" from Japan. In an exchange of speeches, both North Korean Ambassador Li Son Un and Soviet Presidium member Frol KOZLOV supported proposals advanced during the June session of North Korea's legislative organ, the Supreme People's Assembly. Nevertheless, there appeared to be some difference of emphasis between the two sides with respect to the Assembly's proposals. The Ambassador appeared to make the complete withdrawal of US forces a

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precondition to other moves such as: (1) the conclusion of a convention between North and South Korea on the non-use of force against each other; (2) a reduction of forces on both sides; and (3) North-South Korean negotiations to discuss "national problems." The Ambassador also seemed to relegate the question of reunification to the far distant future. Kozlov, on the other hand, called first for the conclusion of a mutual non-aggression pact between North and South Korea and then for "united efforts to achieve the withdrawal of US forces." No indication was given as to what he had in mind in calling for united efforts.

Other features marking the two speeches were that the Ambassador leveled a sharp attack against US "imperialism" while Kozlov merely emphasized the necessity of attaining the withdrawal of US forces. Neither side singled out the South Korean regime for special criticism. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

3. Berlin/Germany

On August 15, most Moscow papers printed a TASS account of TITO's interview with Drew PEARSON, which singled out Tito's emphasis on US-Soviet negotiations.

Two Soviet notes on Berlin were also delivered to the Embassy during the week. The first (August 10), [redacted] The second note (August 16) was in response to the US note of June 14, [redacted] (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

POLITICAL - INTERNAL

4. Leadership

The week unrolled under the sign of the Gemini and all manner of things came in pairs, from the orbiting of the Chuvash and Ukrainian astronauts to the expulsions of BASOV and BASSOW, the former from his post as Party First Secretary in star-crossed Rostov Oblast (see below) and the latter from his Moscow assignment as correspondent for Newsweek. In the unlikeliest conjunction, a delegation from the UAR "hero-city" of Port Said visited the hero-city of Volgograd, ex-Stalingrad.

While Moscow provided the channel for the week's news, nearly all its significant events took place elsewhere in the Soviet Union; Baikonur, concealed under the dateline appellation "Cosmodrome," from which Nikolayev and Popovich began their "group flight"; the Karaganda steppe, where it ended; Rostov, where popular dissatisfaction with the June 1 meat-and-butter price rises resulted, two and a half months later, in the replacement of the Oblast Party chief (see below); Kiev, where a change in the Ukrainian Party leadership was made at a Central Committee Plenum (see below); and Yalta, where KHRUSHCHEV (seconded by BREZHNEV)

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kept up a running fire of communications, by radio-telephone, radiogram, and telephone, with the "heavenly twins," to the point that he made their exploit almost seem to be a triple play.

The First Secretary also found the time on August 15 to receive a British Labor MP, John CRONIN, and, again with Brezhnev, to see King Mohammed ZAHIR of Afghanistan off at the Simferopol airport.

PODGORNY presided over the Ukrainian Party's Central Committee Plenum on August 9-11 and attended the August 16 Plenum of the Kiev Oblast Committee.

News of a strictly Moscow venue was almost crowded off the ecstatic pages of Pravda and Izvestiya by the blanket coverage given to Vostok III and Vostok IV.

MIKOYAN, minding the protocol store during this vacation month, received the Bulgarian Minister of National Defense, Colonel-General D. M. DZHUROV, and the new Cuban Ambassador, C. OLIVARES Sanchez, on August 13, and the Brazilian Ambassador, V. LEITAO da Cunha, on August 15.

Kozlov and SHELEPIN were the ranking Soviet guests at the North Korean reception on August 15, marking the seventeenth anniversary of the "liberation of Korea from the Japanese usurpers." Kozlov replied to the toast of North Korean Ambassador Li Son Un. Meanwhile, KIRILENKO was overseeing the dismissal of Basov in Rostov.

As the week ended, the Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced it had "proposed" to Newsweek correspondent Whitman Bassow that he leave the USSR (Pravda, August 17). His accreditation as a resident correspondent had been withdrawn "in connection with the violation by W. Bassow of the norms of conduct of foreign correspondents in the USSR, as well as in view of the grossly slanderous character of the correspondence of Bassow about the Soviet Union, which had evoked the justifiable indignation of Soviet public opinion" (a gross distortion in view of the fact that only a handful of Soviet officials have the opportunity of reading Newsweek and other Western publications). (UNCLASSIFIED)

5. First Secretary of Rostov Oblast Replaced

At an August 15 Plenum of the Party's Rostov Oblast Committee (Obkom), First Secretary A. V. Basov was replaced by V. V. SKRYABIN, formerly First Secretary of the Zaporozhye Obkom in the Ukraine. Basov's dismissal, it was announced, was "in connection with his transfer to other work." As usual, his new employment was not specified.

CC-CPSU Presidium member A. P. Kirilenko participated in the work of the Plenum and delivered an (unreported) speech.

The Embassy has previously reported the rumors and other evidence leading to the conclusion that there was serious trouble in Rostov Oblast (WEEKA No. 32). Basov's removal offers strong evidence that this was so. The Party may have concluded that some form of "localism," plus poor agitprop work, combined to cause

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the difficulties in Rostov Oblast, for Skryabin, besides being a total outsider to Rostov Party affairs, apparently is a specialist in "ideological work" (Embassy's A-243, August 17). (UNCLASSIFIED)

6. Ukrainian CP-CC Plenum, August 9-11

A Plenum of the Ukrainian CP-CC, held at Kiev on August 9-11, discussed progress in the fulfillment of the Seven-Year Plan and organizational and ideological questions (Embassy's A-241, August 17). Principal speakers were V. V. SHCHERBITSKY, Chairman of the Ukrainian Council of Ministers, and candidate-member of the CPSU-CC Presidium; A. D. SKABA, Secretary of the Ukrainian CP-CC; and N. V. Podgorny, First Secretary of the Ukrainian CP-CC and member of the CPSU-CC Presidium. The Plenum elected P. E. SHELEST, heretofore Kiev Oblast First Secretary, to the Ukrainian CC Secretariat, where he will presumably fill the vacancy left by the death of A. I. GAYEVOY on July 3. (UNCLASSIFIED)

For the Chargé d'Affaires ad interim:

Boris H. Klosson

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